

Washington, D.C. – The Solar Technology Roadmap Act, H.R. 3585, passed the House today and was supported by Congressman Tom Rooney (R-Fla.). This bill creates an updated strategic roadmap to advance solar energy technologies through prioritized research, development, and demonstration (RD&D) activities.

“Florida will be the front line for solar energy innovation,” said Rooney. “This legislation is an important step to developing a national plan to develop solar energy and reduce our dependence on traditional energy sources. The current solar power plant under construction in Indiantown and the planned sustainable community at Babcock Ranch are great examples of how solar power is being utilized in Florida. After all Florida is the Sunshine State and we need to continue to find new and innovative ways to harness this resource.”

The Solar Technology Roadmap Act establishes a comprehensive process to create this roadmap for solar technology RD&D activities conducted by the federal government in partnership with the private sector, with a focus on the Department of Energy (DOE).

The Secretary of Energy is directed to award grants to carry out these programs on a merit-reviewed basis, and specifically to provide awards to industry-led consortia for RD&D in solar manufacturing.

The bill requires the Secretary of Energy to appoint a Solar Technology Roadmap Committee, which includes industry representation. The Secretary must also appoint a Committee chair, who is not a federal employee. The Committee will create a Solar Technology Roadmap within eighteen months of enactment of the Act.

The roadmap will present the best current estimate of the near-term (up to 2 years), mid-term (up to 7 years), and long-term (up to 15 years) RD&D needs in solar technology. It must also provide direct guidance for solar technology RD&D activities supported by the federal government. The bill requires that 30 percent of DOE solar RD&D funding in 2012 is pursuant to the recommendations of the roadmap, ramping up to 75 percent in 2015. The Committee must update the roadmap annually as needed, and comprehensively review and revise it every three years.

The bill also authorizes DOE to conduct at least 13 solar demonstration projects of various sizes, and it requires DOE to study the performance of existing photovoltaic installations and identify opportunities to improve the energy productivity of these systems. In addition, DOE must establish a program of RD&D related to the reuse, recycling, and safe disposal of photovoltaic devices.

The bill has been endorsed by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, the Solar Energy Industries Association, BP, IBM, Intel, and National Semiconductor.